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Red River Junction

Research by Huber D. McLellan

~~Who knows~~ Where was Red River Junction, Polk County ~~was~~ situated? The writer has sought in vain for an answer. Yet it was there:- eight dwellings, forty persons, real estate to the value of $6,800, and personal property worth $6,200. It is all nicely recorded in the manuscript copy of the Federal census of 1860 for Minnesota, now on file in the Minnesota State Historical Society Library. The census of Polk county was taken July 5, 1860 by Oscar Taylor, assistant Marshall.

The returns are made by post offices of which Polk county then had four according to the census:- Georgetown, Rice River, Red Lake, and Red River Junction. The population totaled 240. Now the writer was interested in the people who lived within the present limits of Polk County and not the limits it had in 1860. Therefore Georgetown, Rice River, and Red Lake now being in other counties were not ~~Essay, Hornum, and Fosheim~~ considered by him. Red River Junction could not be so easily disposed of.

There is no place so named within what constituted the original limits of Polk county on any map consulted by the writer. ~~He was aware that the term name had been applied to pa~~

Now Holcombe, who is generally dependable, says Red River Junction was on the site of the present city of East Grand Forks, but does not give his source. But was it? ~~An inspection~~ of a ~~map of the original county~~ will show that the confluence of the Red Lake ~~Rive~~ and Red Rivers would be the most likely

the names of some of the forty persons are striking to one who is a bit familar with Red River Valley history. Charles Cavileer, Samuel Painter, and George W. Northrup are names in this list which lead to the doubting of the accuracy of the census.

a letter addressed to the Post Office Department brought the reply that it had no record of any post office named Red River Junction in Minnesota.

1. Holcombe, p. 57.

the North Dakota Historical Society reported it had no information concerning Red River Junction, but suggested it was simply a place where mail was left for persons along the river. That thought had occured to the writer when reading Hargrave's description of the "way bag" system,[2] but was rejected as improbable in view of what facts he had concerning the forty persons.

Judge Kneeshaw of Pembina believes that from the names of the inhabitants of Red River Junction the place is none other than Pembina.[3] That can hardly be ~~true~~ true, however, for Pembina was a post office in 1857 with Joe Rolette postmaster![4] Futhermore, it does not seem likely that Taylor would enumerate residents of Pembina, Dakota Tenitory in Polk county, Minnesota returns. True the whole region had been Pembina county, Minnesota Tenitory, but that was two years in the past. Yet Mr. George Winship, former

2. Hargrave, Red River. p. 304.
4. Andrews, C. C. p. U.S. Blue Book 1859. p. 179
3. Letter of July 11, 1927.

editor of the Grand Forks Herald, and acquainted with the Red River Valley since 1867, believes from the names of the inhabitants of Red River Junction that they lived in the vicinity of Pembina.[5] Can it be that Taylor was in error when he listed forty persons accurately as to given names, ages, and birthplaces as far as determined, in Red River Junction, Polk county? Three men, contemporaries of Cavileer, have informed the writer that Cavileer was a resident of Pembina from 1851 until his death. From the available evidence it appears to the writer that both They and Taylor are in error.

A biographical sketch of Cavileer written about 1889 states that from 1855 to 1864 he lived elsewhere than Pembina.[6] This account by the way agrees accurately with the census of 1860 in the names and ages of the Cavileer family. Where Cavileer was in these eight years is not related, but some information on it was found. Mr. James W. Taylor who related

5. Letter of Feb. 23, 1928.

6. Album — p. 517 } Vol. I. Red R.V. p. 105

x "E. K. Cavileer native of Kildonan, 1858" Reg. of Old Settlers

March 3, 1860 to the Minnesota State Legislature concerning trade on the Red River acknowledges his indebtedness to Mr. Charles Cavileer who lives at St. Boniface, opposite Fort Garry, for information used in the report. Taylor's trip to Fort Garry was made in 1859, so Cavileer could have easily ~~is~~ moved to Polk County before July 5, 1860. ~~He was~~ For Manton Marble in September 1860, bids good-bye to Charles Cavileer at Fort Garry and thinks of him as though he lived in that vicinity. If Cavileer ~~then~~ had lived away from St. Boniface since Taylor's visit he must have been ~~only~~ but for a short time. Cavileer, in a letter to the Old Settlers Association of the Red River Valley dated at Pembina, January 30, 1880 in which he tells of his life in the valley, does not mention the fact that he once lived just across the river from where [Grand Forks, N. Dak.] they are now holding their meeting.[9] Line wants

7. Taylor - p. 1.
8. Marble - Harpers. Feb. 1861. p. 319.
9. Grand Forks Herald. Feb. 5, 1880.

Red River Junction

suppose he would have done so had he lived there. The case of George W. Northrup seemingly offers still stronger arguments against East Grand Forks or Pembina being the Red River Junction of Taylor's returns.

Edward Eggleston met Northrup in the summer of 1860 on the steamer Pioneer and states that Northrup then was living in a cabin near Fort Abercrombie. Eggleston, without giving his source, states that in the winter of 1860-61 Northrup carried the "mail from Fort Abercrombie to Pembina, two hundred miles land journey over a country without a habitation."[10] Apparently Eggleston has forgotten that Georgetown ~~be~~ was situated between the fort and Pembina. Then too where were Rice River and Red River Junction? It may be that Northrup followed the trail on the Dakota side of the Red River on his mail journeys. John Schulz

10. Eggleston, 1:467-472. Harpers - Feb. 1894

in the spring of 1860 encountered Northrup.
"Near abercrombie I met the noted
frontiersman, George Northrup, in
whose log cabin were a few books which
showed superior culture".[11] Northrup was
appointed in 1861 by Governor Ramsey as one
of the county commissioners for Buckenridge
county[12] so his residence ~~must have~~ seems further confirmed.
~~was~~ near Fort abercrombie ~~as Eggleston~~
~~and Schulz both state~~.

Samuel Painter was the captain of
the Pioneer when Eggleston met Northrup
and Eggleston says they steamed 300 miles
without seeing on the banks a human
being or a home. It does not seem probable
that captain Painter would steam past his
home when his wife and five children
were without Eggleston knowing it.

~~If Red River junction was~~ ~~Forks there Wanton Marble did not know~~
~~they were passing by a settlement~~
~~homes for Northrup was~~

Hargrave does not mention any
settlement at the junction of Red Lake and

11 Schulz p. 7
12 Andreas

Red rivers in his description of his journey in 1861 to Fort Garry so one ~~may~~ might conclude it had ceased to exist since Taylor's count of its inhabitants if the Grand Forks was its location. However, ~~the~~ the main contention so far has ~~chiefly~~ been the place was not in Polk county. Do any of the facts found that would help substantiate Taylor's returns seem it indicate that it was?

When Polk county was created the southern boundary was the Buffalo River. In that neighborhood many of the Red River townsites of 1857-60 found their locations. Dakotah city ~~was on the~~ and Lafayette, were at the mouth of the Sheyenne River. Now in march 1859 George Northrup and his partner clowes were living in "a nameless city" ~~three~~ two miles north of Lafayette.[13] another writers states that Northrup ~~and~~ the claim Northrup was holding down was one mile north of the Sheyenne.[14] If this nameless

13. Probstfield, R.M. in Vol. I Red R.V. Hist. p. 139. Aug. 1860 Hafen p. 309
14. Vol. I p. 149

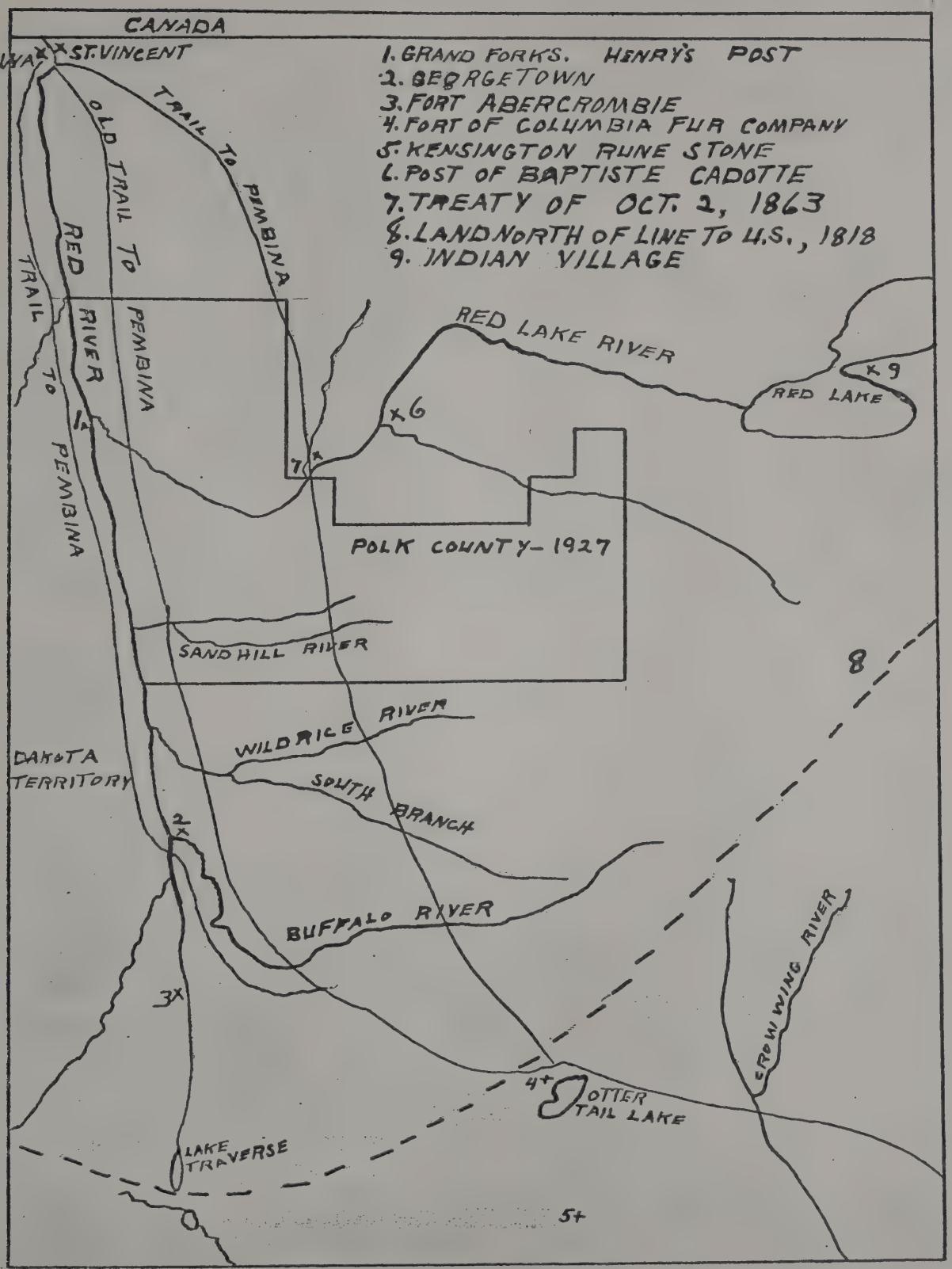
city was the Red River Junction of the census that it was apparently south of the Buffalo and therefore not in Polk County. Sintominie and Burlington were claim locations north of Graham's Point[15] and seemingly south of Georgetown so therefore out of Polk county. On Feb. 27, 1861 a post road was authorized from Breckenridge in Toombs county to Pembina via Fort Abercrombie, Graham's Point, Sytominie, Lafayette, Dakota, and Georgetown[16] ~~he was~~ Red River Junction? ~~Is not Fine situated~~. One would think a place of eight houses would have been mentioned. ~~If Red River Junction was south of the Buffalo it was platted on that river land.~~ In view of the facts the writer concludes ~~conclusion~~ that ~~the~~ East Grand Forks ~~is not~~ on the site of Red River Junction, and that of the forty inhabitants Northrup, at least, lived south of the Buffalo River, of the others he knows nought.

15. Blakeley - p. 47
16. Statutes of the U.S. Vol. XII. 36th cong. 2nd sess. ch. 57 (p. 160)

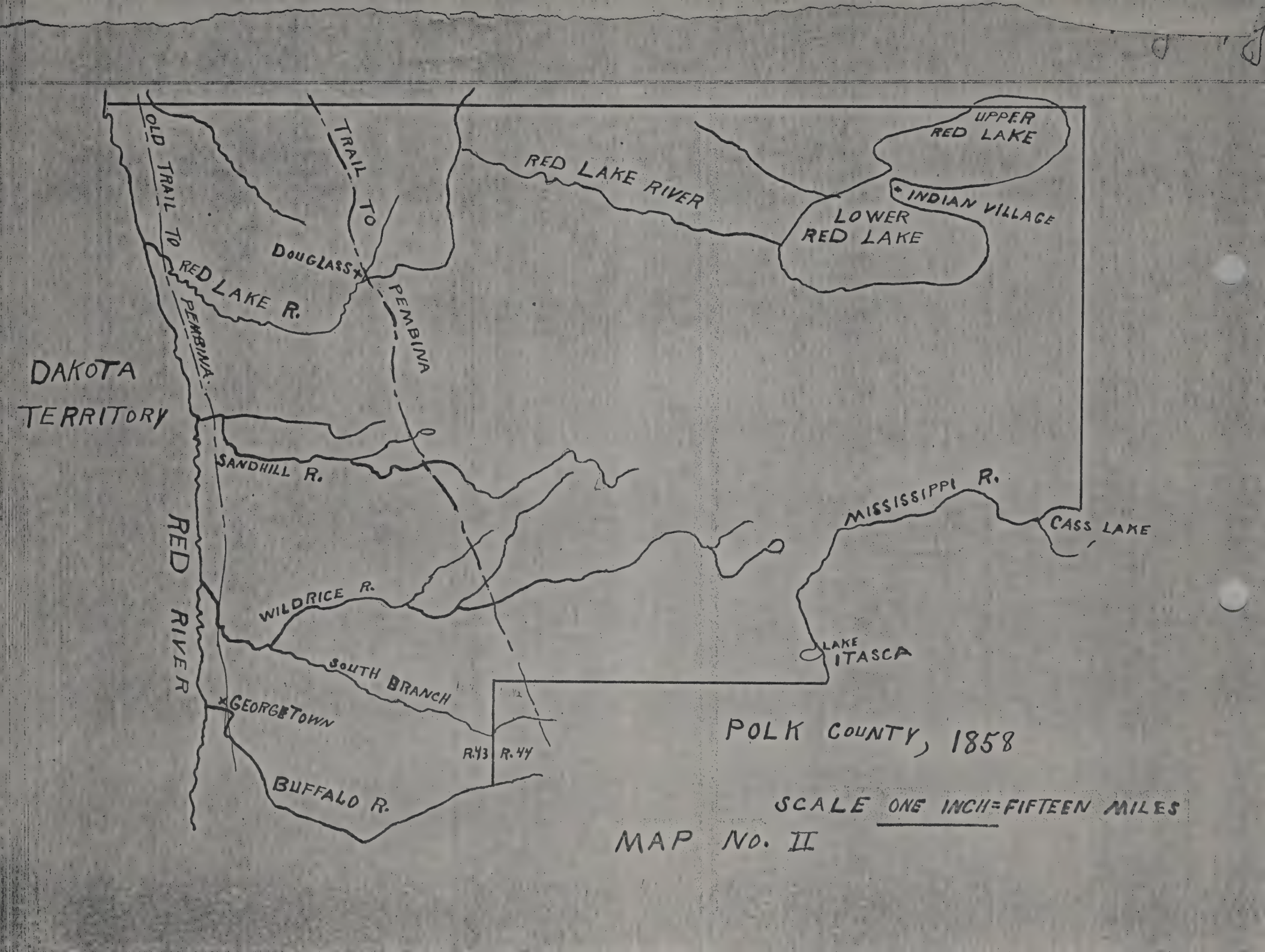
1. Holcombe, R. (editor) Compendium of History and Biography of Polk county, minnesota. p. 57
2. Hargrave, J.J. Red River. p. 304
4. andrews, C.C. minnesota and Dacotah p. Register of officers and agents in the Service of the united States, 1859. p. 179
3. Judge Kneeshaw - Letter of July 11, 1927
5. Winship, George - Letter of Feb. 23, 1928
6. alden, Ogle and Company. albeum of Biography Red River and Park Regions. Chicago, 1889. p. 517
7. Taylor, James W. Northwest British america and its relations to the state of minnesota. p. 1
8 Harpers monthly. Feb. 1861. p. 319
9 Grand Forks Herald. Dak. Ter. Feb. 5, 1880
10 Harpers Monthly. Feb. 1894. pp. 467-72
11 manitoba Historical Society Transactions No. 45. (apr. 5, 1894) p. 7
12. andreas, A. Illustrated Historical atlas of minnesota. Chicago, 1874 p. 249
13. ~~minnesota Historical Society Col. Vol. II~~ pp. 45-66 (over)
14. Taylor. p. 8
15. Seagall-Adding - Map of minnesota, 1860.
16. Minnesota Laws, 1857. ch. LXVII, Sec. 2

13. R. M. Probstfield in History of the Red River Valley. Chicago, 1909. Vol. I, p. 139
Harpers monthly. August, 1860. p. 309.
14. Edward Griffin in History of Red River Valley. Vol. I. p. 149
15. Captain Blakeley in Minnesota Historical Society collection. Vol. VIII. p. 47
16. Statutes of the United States. Vol. XII. ~~page 160 Little, Brown, and company.~~ 36th cong., 2nd sess. ch. 57. (p. 160). Little Brown, and company.

MAP NO. I



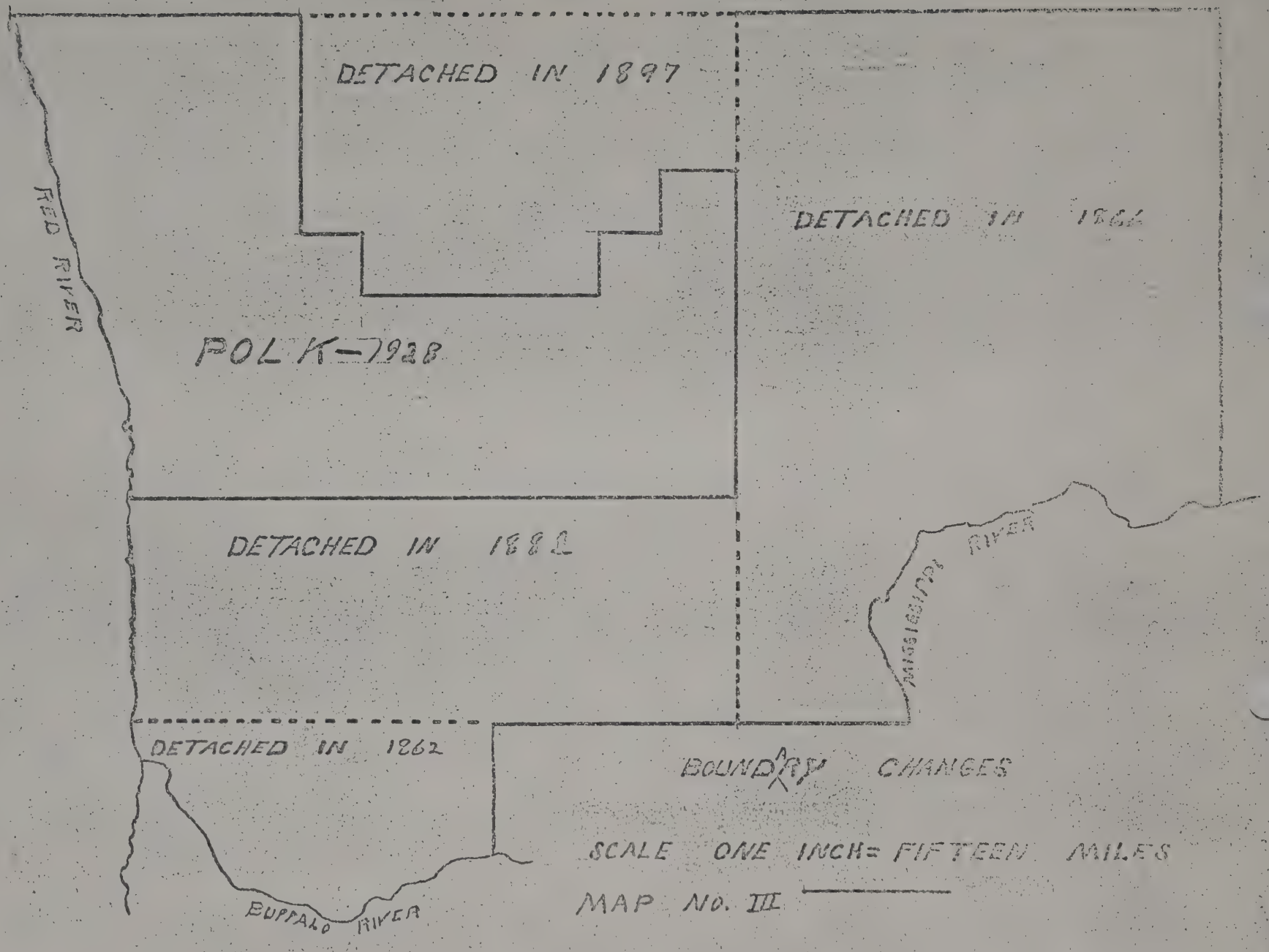
RED RIVER VALLEY 1789 - 1860



POLK COUNTY, 1858

SCALE ONE INCH=FIFTEEN MILES

MAP No. II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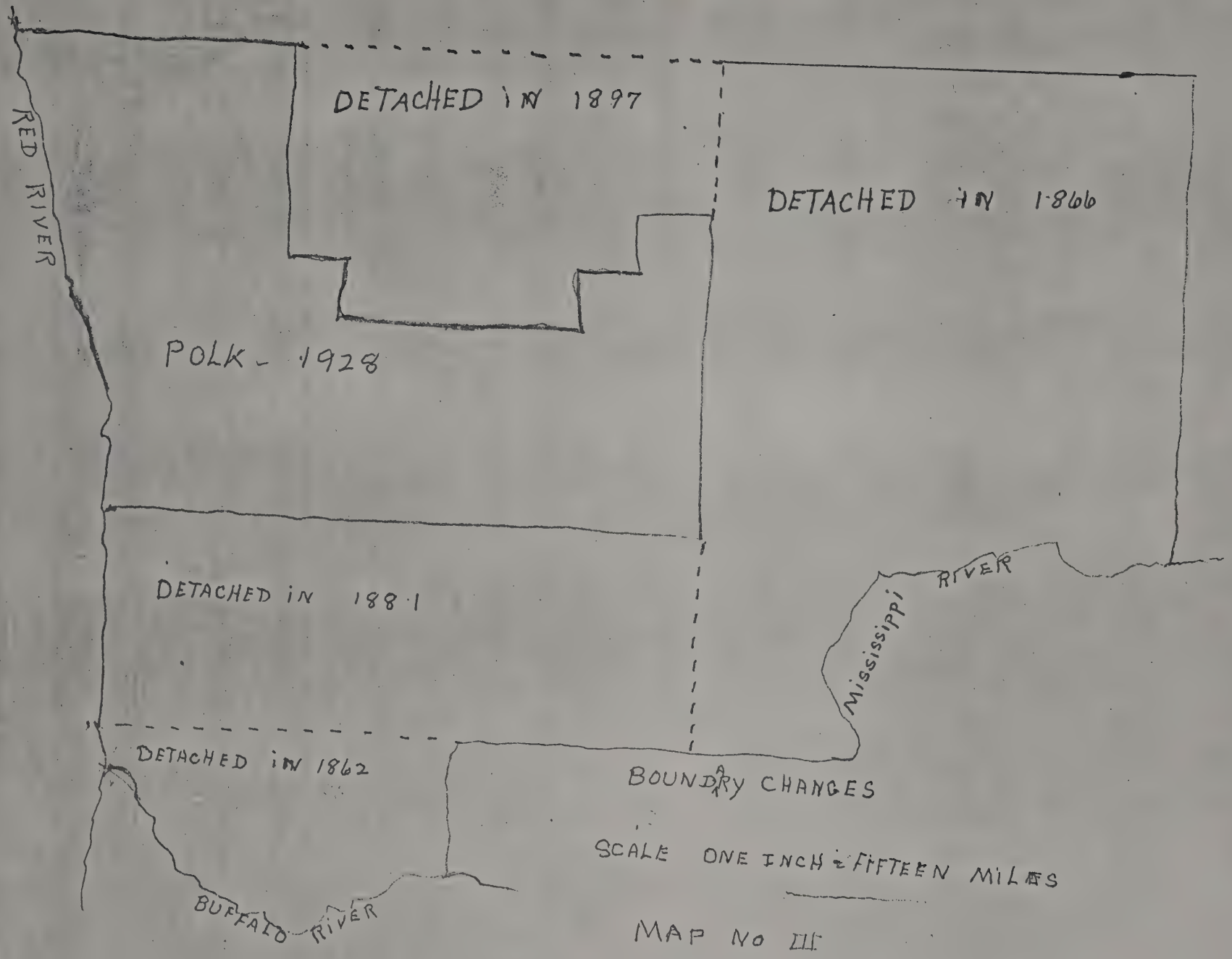
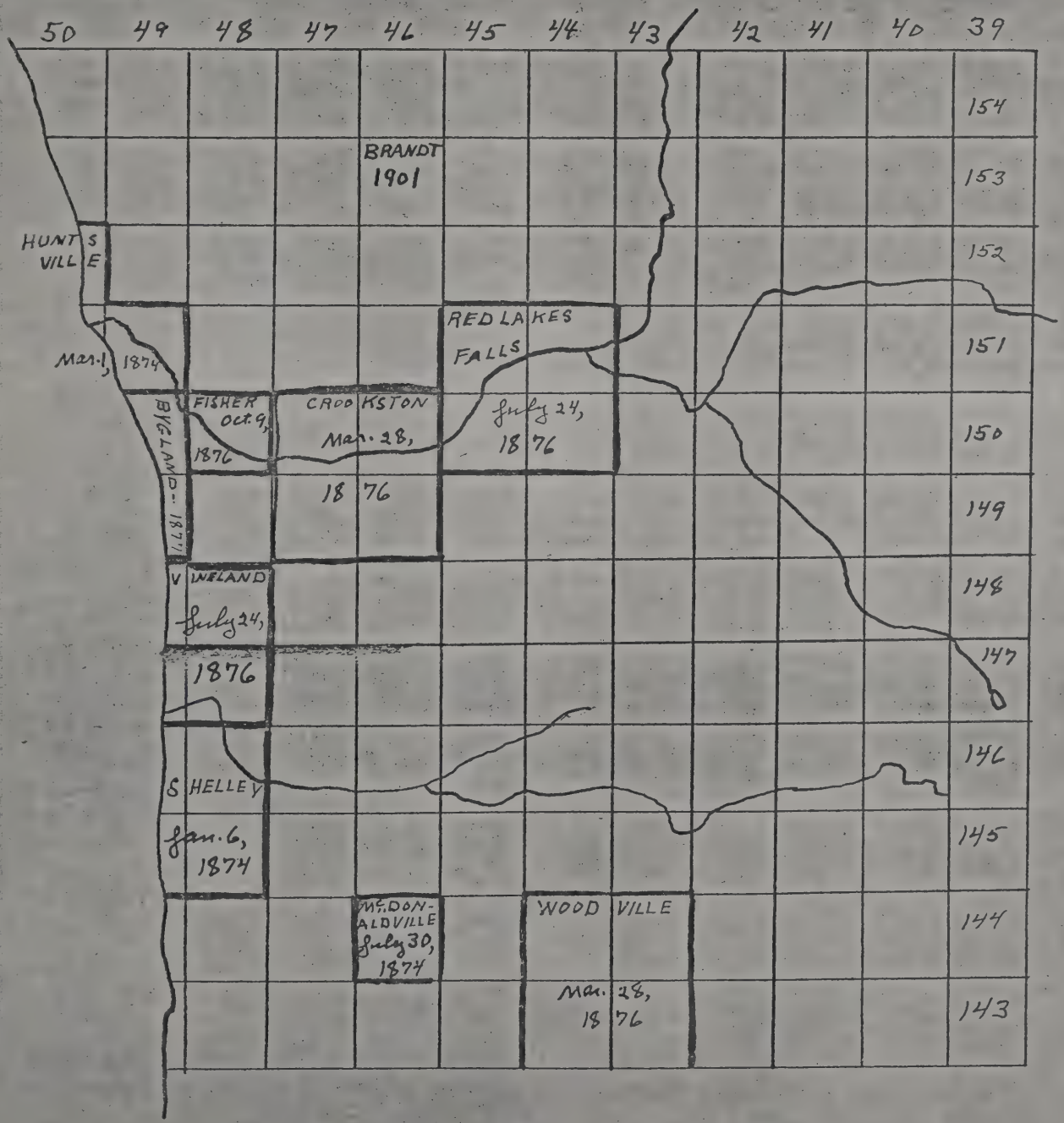
DETACHED IN 1864
RED RIVER
POLK—1928
DETACHED IN 1881
MISSISSIPPI RIVER
DETACHED IN 1862
BOUNDARY CHANGES
SCALE ONE INCH= FIFTEEN MILES
BUFFALO RIVER
MAP NO. III


DETACHED IN 1897
DETACHED IN 1866
RED RIVER
POLK - 1928
DETACHED IN 1881
MISSISSIPPI RIVER
DETACHED IN 1862
BOUNDARY CHANGES
SCALE ONE INCH = FIFTEEN MILES
BUFFALO RIVER
MAP No III

MAP No. IV

EARLY TOWNSHIP ORGANIZATIONS



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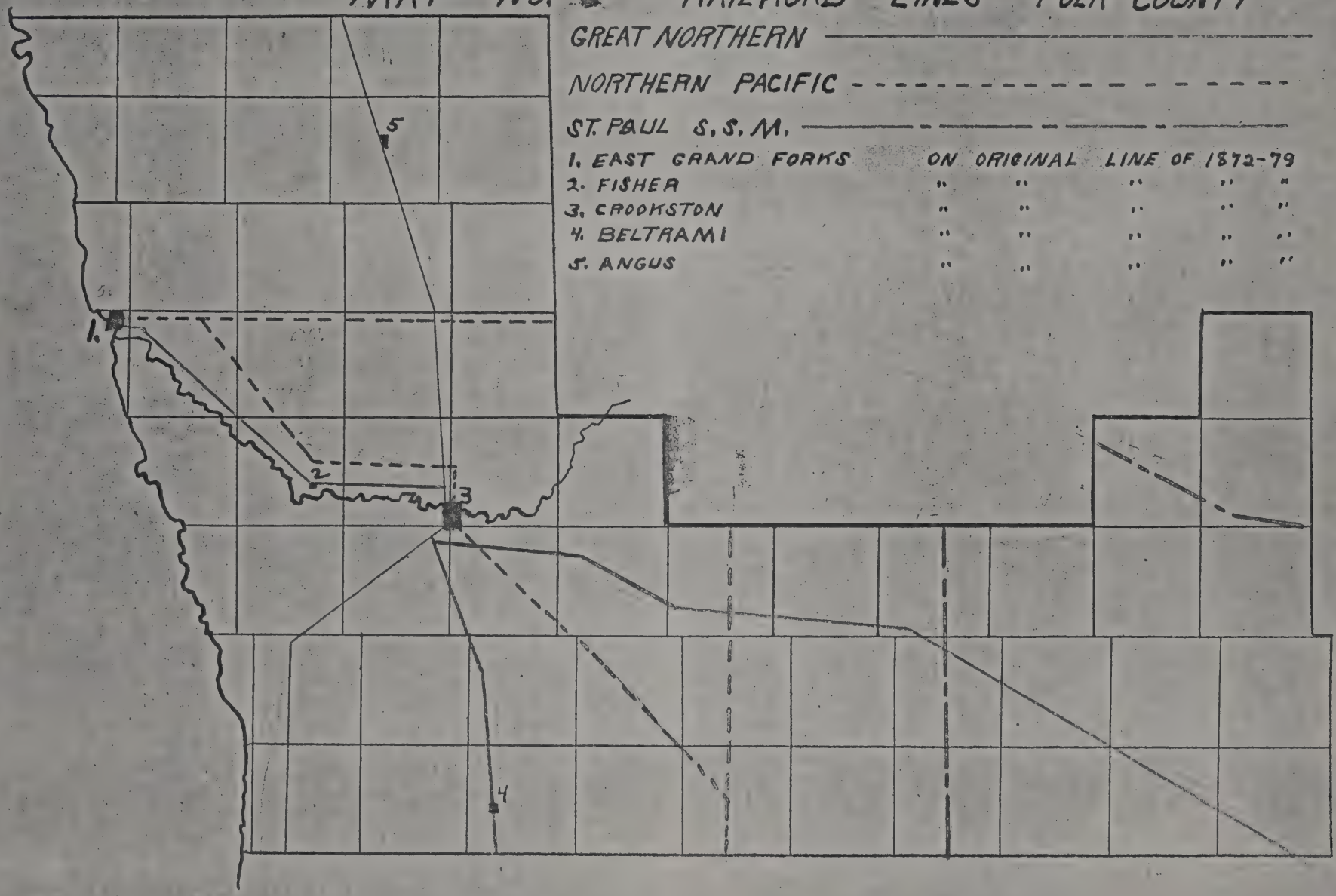
MAP NO. V RAILROAD LINES POLK COUNTY



No. VI

MAP No VI POPULATION MAP BASED ON CENSUS OF 1910

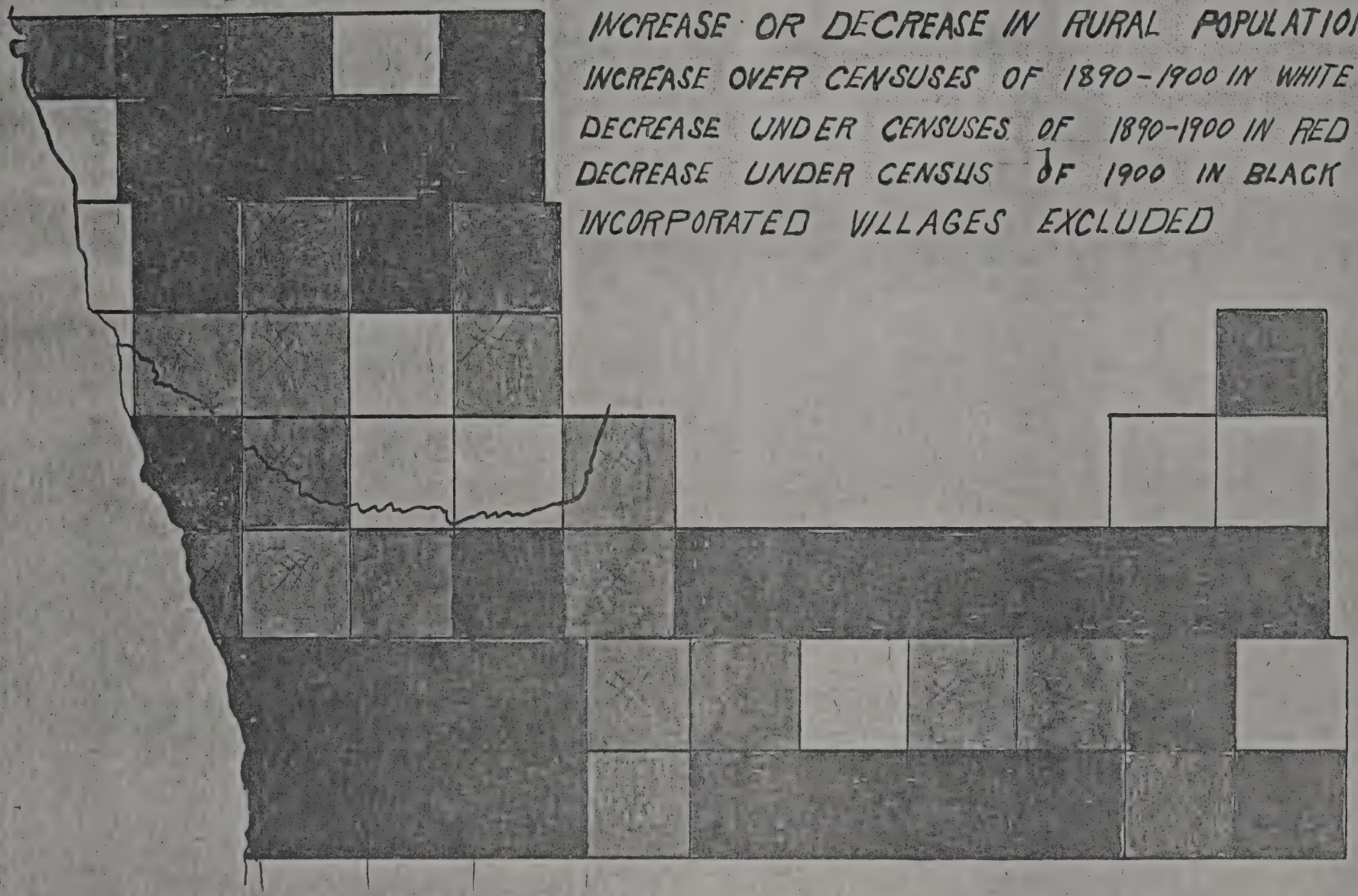
INCREASE OR DECREASE IN RURAL POPULATION

INCREASE OVER CENSUSES OF 1890-1900 IN WHITE

DECREASE UNDER CENSUSES OF 1890-1900 IN RED

DECREASE UNDER CENSUS OF 1900 IN BLACK

INCORPORATED VILLAGES EXCLUDED



POPULATION MAP VII BASED ON CENSUS OF 1920

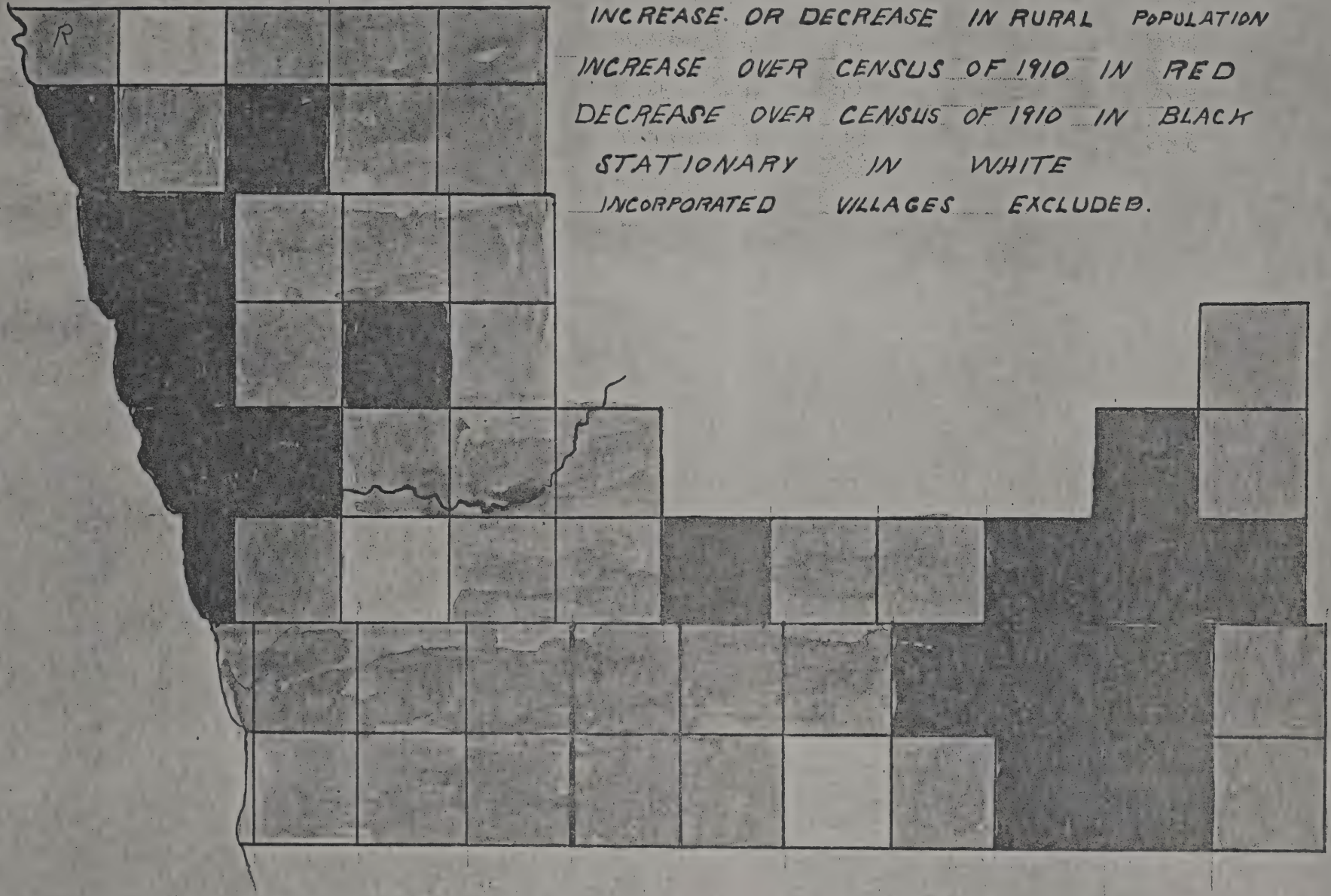
INCREASE OR DECREASE IN RURAL POPULATION

INCREASE OVER CENSUS OF 1910 IN RED

DECREASE OVER CENSUS OF 1910 IN BLACK

STATIONARY IN WHITE

INCORPORATED VILLAGES EXCLUDED.

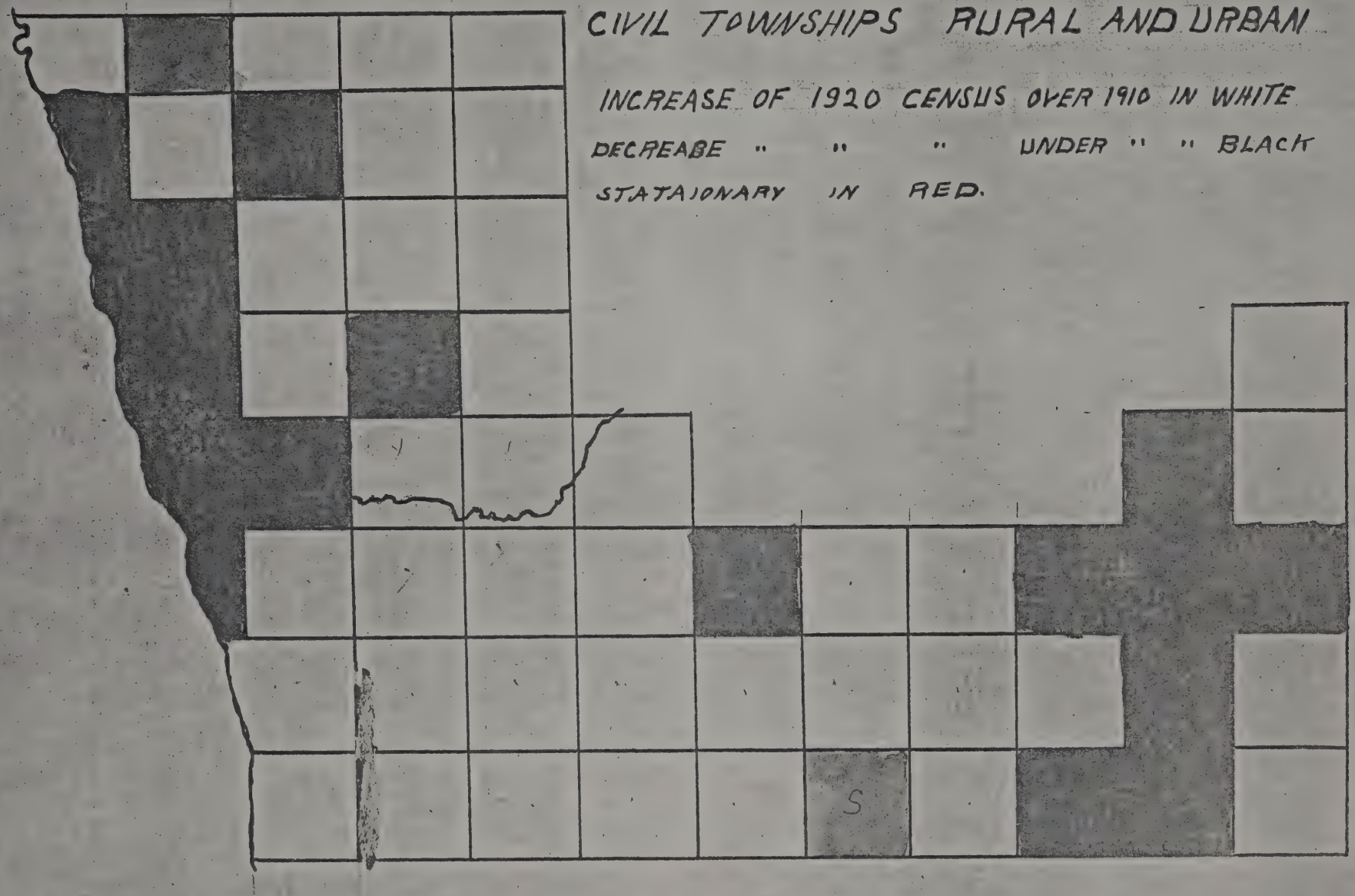


POPULATION MAP VIII INCREASE OR DECREASE IN CIVIL TOWNSHIPS RURAL AND URBAN

INCREASE OF 1920 CENSUS OVER 1910 IN WHITE

DECREABE " " " UNDER " " BLACK

STATAIONARY IN RED.

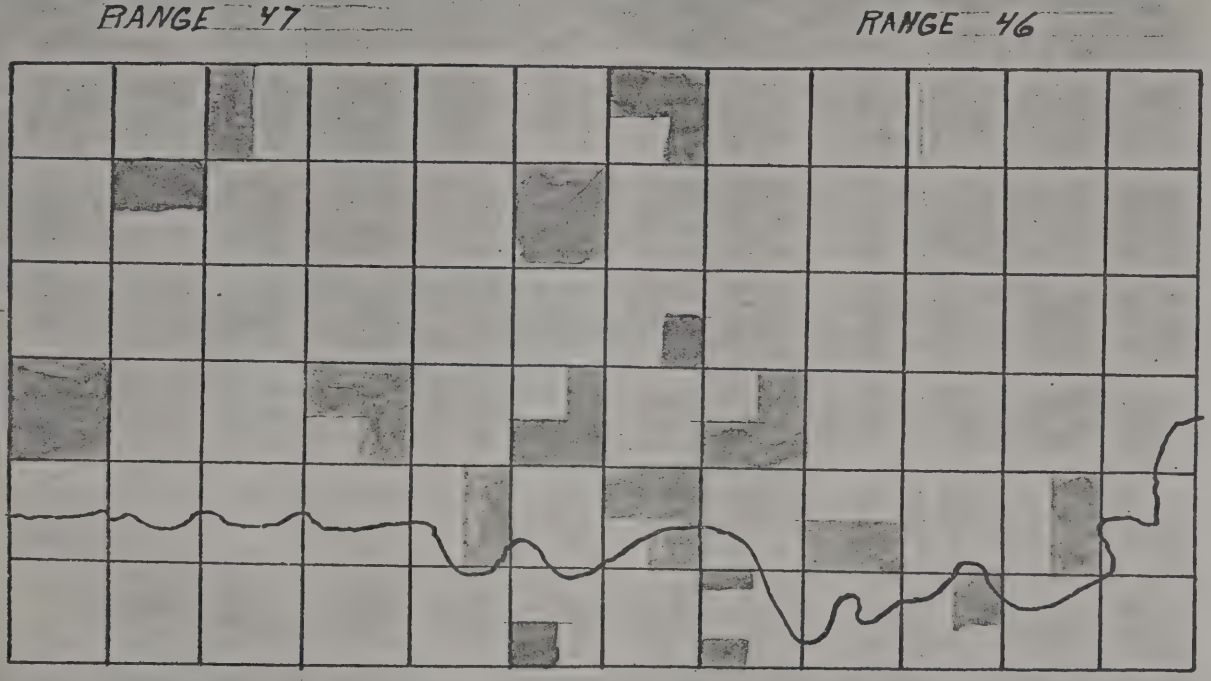


MAP No. IX

POLK COUNTY IN 1874-75 SURVEYED AREA

PRESENT BOUNDARIES HEAVY BLACK

MAP NO. X



LANDS ENTERED WITH CHIPPEWA HALF BREED SCRIP ARE MARKED IN RED

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